



# Libby Homeowners

## Vermiculite or Asbestos

### In or Around Your Home or Business

EPA Information Center \* 501 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923 \* (406) 293-6194

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**Expanded Vermiculite**

### Vermiculite in Libby

Vermiculite was used in a variety of forms for decades in and around Libby homes as a soil additive, a lightweight aggregate for concrete, and attic insulation, among other things.

If vermiculite is present it may contain Libby asbestos. It will take several years to complete the cleanup and people may encounter vermiculite during that time. Vermiculite will continue to be discovered from time to time long into the future, even after cleanup by the EPA. It is not possible for EPA to remove *all* the contaminated vermiculite. Vermiculite may be left in sealed walls, home foundations, and other relatively inaccessible areas.

Some encounters with vermiculite will be small and may include:

- **minor renovations** - removing old carpets, installing ceiling fans or removing wall outlets
- **minor landscaping** - rototilling and mowing

There will be times when a large pocket of vermiculite is discovered. Such situations include:

- **intrusive digging** - septic systems, sprinklers, and water lines
- **major renovations** - taking walls down, putting in windows, etc.
- **fires** - fire-fighting and subsequent cleanup

### Protect Yourself

Hiring an asbestos contractor to clean up vermiculite spilled while doing home improvements is recommended to minimize your exposure.

### Take Steps to Avoid Exposure

1. For a small quantity, such as a handful of vermiculite, wet wipe it and throw it away. For a small quantity of vermiculite in soil, such as a very isolated area or a few random flakes, we recommend you wet it and try to work around the area. **If possible, leave it alone.** If the material is buried, keep it that way - it's better buried than at the surface.
2. HEPA filter vacuums are effective on small quantities of vermiculite indoors. **Never vacuum vermiculite with a regular vacuum.** HEPA vacuums and wet wiping can be used periodically to remove any small amounts of asbestos containing dust that is introduced into your home, or to vacuum dust from previously inaccessible locations such as under recently removed carpets, appliances, and furniture.
3. For larger quantities of vermiculite such as what you may find in a breached wall, do not disturb the material. **Do not vacuum large amounts of vermiculite - even with a HEPA vacuum.**
4. Dry mowing or rototilling in yards and gardens where vermiculite is abundant may cause asbestos to become airborne. If possible, sprinkle your yard or garden before mowing or tilling.
5. If you encounter a large amount of vermiculite in soil that cannot be avoided, such as when it was used around pipes, around other structures, or as bulk fill - you may have sparkling soil - **do not disturb the material.**

6. If you are planning on remodeling your home, find out if there is vermiculite in the attic or walls, or any of the materials that will be taken out, disturbed, or are likely to create dust. You can call the EPA Information Center at 293-6194. There are also specific regulations regarding remodeling, demolition, and disposal that may impact your work, especially big projects.

7. Renters - You have a right to know about any adverse conditions at your rental. Ask your landlord about the presence of vermiculite. If you do not receive the information you request, contact the EPA Information Center or Lincoln County Sanitarian.

Libby asbestos is considerably more toxic than other commercial asbestos products. It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. The health risk from exposure to **all** asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. Frequent exposures to high levels of asbestos for lengthy periods of time pose a significant risk. Little disturbance of small amounts of vermiculite insulation or other products containing a low level of asbestos poses a smaller risk, especially if you take basic precautions.

### **Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos ?**

#### **United States Environmental Protection Agency**

EPA Information Center in Libby      293-6194

#### **Lincoln County Department of Environmental Health**

County Sanitarian      **293-7781 ext. 228**

EPA or the County may send personnel out to inspect a situation involving vermiculite or Libby asbestos and give guidance. Guidance may include advising the homeowner to allow EPA or a licensed asbestos contractor to take samples, conduct cleanup or take other special measures to reduce risk of exposure.

Please learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the fact sheets below. The fact sheets are available at:

**EPA Information Center \* 501 Mineral Avenue \* Libby, MT 59923 \* 406-293-6194**

1. **Living With Vermiculite** - Oct. 2003. Provides information about the potential risks of contaminated vermiculite and precautions you can take.
2. **HEPA Vacuum Cleaner Program** - Dec. 2003. Provides information on the effectiveness of HEPA vacuums and describes their role in Libby's cleanup.
3. **Risk - Past, Present and Future** - June 2005. Describes EPA's process of risk assessment and how we work toward reducing risk.

**Explore the EPA web site and its links at: [www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby](http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby)**